

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3838

INFO AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USUN NEW YORK 0423

AMCONSULATE DOUALA BY POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 2466

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GB, EK

SUBJECT: EQUATORIAL GUINEA INTERNAL SITUATION - BORDER PROBLEM WITH
GABON

REF: A. LIBREVILLE 903; B. MADRID 4509; C. LIBREVILLE 893

D. YAOUNDE 2255

1. SUMMARY: AHIDJO BELIEVED TO HAVE PLAYED MODERATING ROLE IN RECENT
EG-GABON BORDER DISPUTE. SPEAKS DISPAIRINGLY OF SITUATION IN
EQUATORIAL GUINEA AND OF PROSPECTS FOR ANY IMPROVEMENT SO LONG
AS MACIAS REMAINS PRESIDENT.

2. DURING MEETING WITH PRESIDENT AHIDJO JULY 23 I INQUIRED ABOUT
RECENT EG-GABON BORDER DISPUTE. PRESIDENT STATED THAT PRESIDENT
HAD DISCUSSED PROBLEM WITH HIM AT SOME LENGTH DURING THEIR MEETING
IN GAROUA TWO WEEKS AGO. BONGO SAID THAT MINISTER HE HAD
SENT TO MALABO WITH MAPS BASED ON 1900 BORDER CONVENTION SUPPORT-
ING GABONESE CLAIMS HAD RETURNED EMPTY-HANDED. HE DIDN'T KNOW
WHAT TO DO NEXT. HE TALKED OF CALLING IN SPANISH AND FRENCH
GOVERNMENTS, SIGNATORIES TO 1900 CONVENTION TO PROVIDE DEFINITIVE
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RULING ON BORDER, EVEN THREATENED "TO GO TO WAR." AHIDJO TOLD

HIM TO CALM DOWN.

3. FOLLOWING JULY 13 MEETING OF PRESIDENTS BONGO AND MACIAS AND THEIR JOINT VISIT TO DISPUTED AREA, BONGO TELEPHONED AHIDJO TO TELL HIM THAT EVERYTHING HAD BEEN ARRANGED. MACIAS HAD ACCEPTED THE VALIDITY OF GABON BORDER CLAIM AND HAD AGREED TO WITHDRAW TROOPS FROM AREA. AT SAME TIME BONGO, OBSERVING THAT THERE WERE SMALL CLOISTERS GUINEAN NATIONALS LIVING IN DISPUTED AREA AND WORKING SMALL PLANTATIONS, SAW NO NEED FOR THEM TO MOVE, AT LEAST FOR TIME BEING. HE TOLD MACIAS HE HAD NO OBJECTION IF CIVIL ADMINISTRATORS FROM EBEBEYIN CROSSED INTO AREA TO HAVE CONTACT WITH THE GUINEANS THERE. AHIDJO IMPLIED THAT BONGO DID NOT THINK OF THIS ARRANGEMENT AS NECESSARILY A PERMANENT ONE BUT AS A PRACTICAL AND CONCILIATING ONE TO MEET CURRENT SITUATION.

4. AHIDJO TOLD ME THAT HIS SERVICES HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY REPORTED TO HIM THAT GABONESE TROOPS HAVE MOVED INTO AREA AND THAT TENSIONS ARE ONCE MORE MOUNTING. HE PERSONALLY WAS INCLINED TO DISCOUNT SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS REPORT. IT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING IF BONGO ESTABLISHED A MILITARY PRESENCE IN AREA SO VILLAGERS AND OTHERS WOULD BE LEFT IN NO DOUBT THAT IT WAS GABONESE BUT HE SERIOUSLY DOUBTED THAT BONGO INTENDED TO GO BACK ON ARRANGEMENT HE HAD COMPLETED WITH MACIAS.

5. WE THEN MOVED ON TO MORE GENERAL DISCUSSION OF EG SITUATION. I MENTIONED THAT DURING MY TWO YEARS IN AREA, VISITORS TO EG CONSTANTLY REPORTED THAT SITUATION DETERIORATING - YET THE COUNTRY CONTINUED TO SURVIVE. AHIDJO COMMENTED THAT HIS REPORTS WERE THE SAME. MACIAS IS OBSESSED WITH FEAR THAT SPAIN, NEIGHBORS AND OTHERS ARE PLOTTING TO OVERTHROW HIM. HE SEEMS TO HAVE NO CONCERN FOR WELFARE OF HIS PEOPLE AND REPORTS OF TREATMENT METED OUT TO THOSE HE CONSIDERS OPPONENTS ARE SICKENING. BASICALLY COUNTRY HAS THE MEANS TO PROVIDE A REASONABLY GOOD LIFE FOR ITS PEOPLE. IN PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD, CAMEROONIANS WENT TO FERNANDO PO TO ENJOY THE ABUNDANT LIFE. NOW THE REVERSE IS TRUE.

6. I REFERRED TO MACIAS' APPARENT CONCERN OVER GUINEAN REFUGEES LIVING IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. AHIDJO COMMENTED THAT MACIAS HAD SENT A DELEGATION TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER WITH HIM SOME TIME

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AGO. HE HAD ASSURED DELEGATION THAT SO LONG AS HE WAS AROUND MACIAS DID NOT HAVE TO FEAR FROM PRESENCE SUCH REFUGEES IN CAMEROON. FOR MOST PART, AHIDJO ADDED, THEY ARE SIMPLE PEOPLE FROM RIO MUNI WHO HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO PUT UP WITH CONDITIONS OF LIFE UNDER MACIAS REGIME. UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES CAMEROON COULD NOT REFUSE TO RECEIVE THEM. HE HAS HOWEVER HAD THE REFUGEES MOVED FROM BORDER AREAS AS THEIR PRESENCE THERE OBVIOUSLY TROUBLED MACIAS. MOREOVER LATTER'S AGENTS WERE HARASSING THEM AND POTENTIAL FOR INCIDENTS

WAS GREAT. REFUGEES HAVE NOW BEEN RESETTLED IN AKONOLINGA AND IN MBANDJOCK AREAS AND HAVE BEEN GIVEN LAND TO WORK. AHIDJO ADDED THAT BONGO TOLD HIM IN A RECENT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION THAT MACIAS IS NO LONGER REQUESTING RETURN OF GUINEAN REFUGEES IN GABON BUT HAD ASKED THAT THEY BE MOVED AWAY FROM BORDER.

7. I MENTIONED THAT SOME COLLEAGUES IN EG BELIEVE MACIAS MAY NOW BE SEEKING TO EXPAND HIS RELATIONS WITH WEST AS A COUNTER TO LARGE BLOCK PRESENCE, BASING THIS BELIEF ON HIS RECENT ACTION IN ACCEPTING ACCREDITATION OF SEVERAL WESTERN AMBASSADORS WHO HAD BEEN WAITING FOR SOME TIME. PRESIDENT QUICKLY DISCARDED THIS POSSIBILITY, SAYING MACIAS DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HE WANTS. ON CUBAN PRESENCE WHICH AHIDJO VIEWED AS ADJUNCT TO SOVIET PRESENCE, HE COULD WELL IMAGINE THAT THERE MIGHT BE SOME DISENCHANTMENT ON CUBAN SIDE - CUBANS WOULD FIND CONDITIONS IN EG VERY TRYING AND SOON DISCOVER THAT THEY HAD NOTHING TANGIBLE TO WORK WITH. CUBANS HAD ASKED GURC TO SEND BOAT ON REGULAR BASIS TO DOUALA FOR SUPPLIES WHICH HE SEEMED TO FIND RATHER AMUSING ACKNOWLEDGMENT BY CUBANS OF STATE OF GUINEAN ECONOMY. HE ADDED THAT CUBANS WOULD LIKE TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH CAMEROON REFERENCE TO PAST DIFFICULTIES AND (YAOUNDE 1401) BUT APART FROM A SHRUG OF SKEPTISM DID NOT VOLUNTEER WHAT DECISION HE MIGHT REACH.

8. COMMENT. I HAVE NEVER SEEN PRESIDENT AS NEGATIVE AS IN CASE OF MACIAS AND EG SITUATION. HE SAW NO GLIMMER OF ENCOURAGEMENT IN EG PICTURE, FELT THAT MACIAS WOULD HAVE TO STEW IN HIS OWN JUICE AND THAT THERE WAS LITTLE ANY OUTSIDER COULD DO. SEVERAL YEARS AGO GURC HAD SOUGHT TO ENCOURAGE MORE ACTIVE US INTEREST IN EG. MY REFERENCE TO POSSIBILITY THAT MACIAS MAY NOW BE SEEKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH WEST PROVIDED AN OPENING FOR HIM TO REITERATE EARLIER ENCOURAGEMENT BUT IT EVIDENT THAT HE SAW LITTLE TO BE GAINED IN SO DOING.

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9. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT MADE NO SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO HIS ROLE IN EG-GABON BORDER DISPUTE, I SUSPECT HE PROBABLY HAD A HAND IN JULY 13 MEETING OF MACIAS AND BONGO. AT VERY LEAST HE SEEMS TO HAVE HAD CALMING EFFECT ON BONGO AND TO HAVE INTRODUCED A SENSE OF PROPORTION INTO THE DISPUTE.

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